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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted of Demonstration Schools in Individualized Instruction (DSII) in Texas with the aim of demonstrating the kinds of inservice education that evolve in support of successful educational innovations. A summary of innovative practices in the surveyed schools, such as program objectives, materials, staffing, organization, and pacing is presented. A survey of inservice education practices in these schools revealed similar patterns in experiences, incentives, planning, and objectives. It is suggested that a high quality of inservice has a distinct relationship to well developed and validated educational programs. (JD)

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ED189049

INSERVICE EDUCATION: CONTRIBUTION TO INNOVATIONS

A Review of a Study of the Elementary Demonstration Schools in Individualized Instruction in Texas

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

Inservice education continues to be a crucial area of interest to educators. Educational technology is ever expanding and increasing. Pressured by growing demands of society, educational institutions, and the teaching profession itself, teachers are obliged to engage in processes of professional development to stay current in a number of skills. These skills include pedagogical strategies, human relations, planning, and evaluation. With increasing frequency, educators have been requesting inservice workshops on stress, probably a direct consequence of having to function in the complex socio-educational environment that has developed around them.

To address the need for inservice education, school officials should do at least the following: (a) set aside time for adequate inservice; (b) fill the allotted time for inservice with meaningful activities that will be perceived as beneficial by the participants; and (c) give moral, material, and economic support to the inservice education effort.

The Department of Professional Development and Instructional Services is always anxious to share research findings that support the positions taken in past publications. In "A Guide to Better Inservice Education in Texas" and *A Review of Inservice Education in Texas* it was affirmed, for example, that a desirable feature of the inservice education program is liberal input from those being served. In a similar sense, inservice programs are likely to be more meaningful when there are diverse training opportunities to reflect the staff member's multiple roles of planner, presenter, and evaluator. This publication, *Inservice Education: Contribution to Innovations,* summarizes a study made in 1976-77, by Helen Almanza and Ben Harris that has as its basic thesis the proposition that program innovation is a function of the inservice education practices that exist in a school.

It is hoped tht *Inservice Education: Contribution to Innovations* will be a worthy contribution to the body of knowledge relating to professional development. It is also anticipated that the ultimate result will be inservice education programs that will address the professional growth needs of school staffs and result in increased learning opportunities for students in the public schools.

Alton O. Bowen
Commissioner of Education

June 1980

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Inservice Education As Change Strategy

Inservice education in the public schools is often viewed as both personally and institutionally important. From a purely personal point of view, inservice education may be remedial in nature, an extension of preservice education, or a way of "keeping abreast of changing times and aware of new developments" (Rubin, 1978, p. 3).

Change in both theory and practice takes many forms: legal mandates abound; curriculum planning is widely utilized; organizational structures are rearranged; instructional materials are developed, selected, or set aside; new staff positions are created; new funding is authorized. These, and numerous other actions, are directed toward improving the quality of education offered in our schools. Whether they are effective or not may be determined by the way in which the classroom teacher responds to efforts to improve teaching and learning.

This publication presents the results of a survey of some of the best examples of individualized programs of instruction in Texas elementary schools. The survey constituted an effort to determine the kinds of inservice education that evolve in support of successful changes in educational practices. Descriptively, it addressed questions about the character of inservice education that emerged when the essential commitment was to specific kinds of locally-identified changes. The schools involved in the study were not responding to any mandate outside the local district. Inservice education was an optional tool for implementation rather than a required component of a funded project. These unique circumstances gave the finding of the investigation special significance.

Before proceeding with the results of the research, it would be fitting to acquaint the reader with the network of schools from which the data for this study were obtained. The Demonstration Schools in Individualized Instruction* network is described in the following section.

The DSII Network For Improving Teaching

An example of an effort made to encourage innovative changes in Texas is the Demonstration Schools in Individualized Instruction (DSII) network. This system was created by the Texas Education Agency in 1971. Its purpose is to create a network of schools whose programs can be viewed by others so that good practices can be diffused from school to school (Texas Education Agency, p. iv). This is a positive effort by the Texas Education Agency, in cooperation with regional education service centers and local districts, to improve teaching by diffusing information about programs that are actually working. The network provides opportunities for educators to study the many ways in which instruction can be individualized in order that they may consider adapting or replicating the practices in their own districts.

What is the Network?

The participants in the network are individual schools or programs which are exemplars of individualized instruction. The DSII schools must have a progam that has been carefully documented and validated as representing a high quality effort at individualized instruction.

The network defines individualized instruction as any system for organizing learning experiences around the individual needs of students, whether working alone or in groups. "It is an approach for providing experiences which are compatible with each student's skills and abilities in terms of knowledge acquired and desired" (Texas Education Agency, 1976, p. v).

The instruction within each program chosen for the network has to meet three principal conditions. These conditions include a diverse array of set goals and objectives, monitoring procedures that provide information about current status, and alternative methods to reach each objective for any given learner. The following list encompasses the features that are generally evident within each program selected for the DSII network:

1. Flexible, workable system of intraclass grouping

2. Variety of materials utilized by teachers and students, selected and assigned after careful diagnosis of the individual student's needs

3. Differentiation of assignment based on careful planning and an efficient system of record keeping

4. Some degree of student autonomy, with each student having played a part in setting objectives and establishing the activities to be undertaken to reach the objectives

5. Tutoring (teacher-student and student-student), to reinforce individual student learning

In addition, all programs are required to have been in operation at least two years before nomination and consideration. The effect of this requirement is that, if chosen, a program must have been operating a minimum of three years before becoming a part of the network, as the selection procedure takes a full year.

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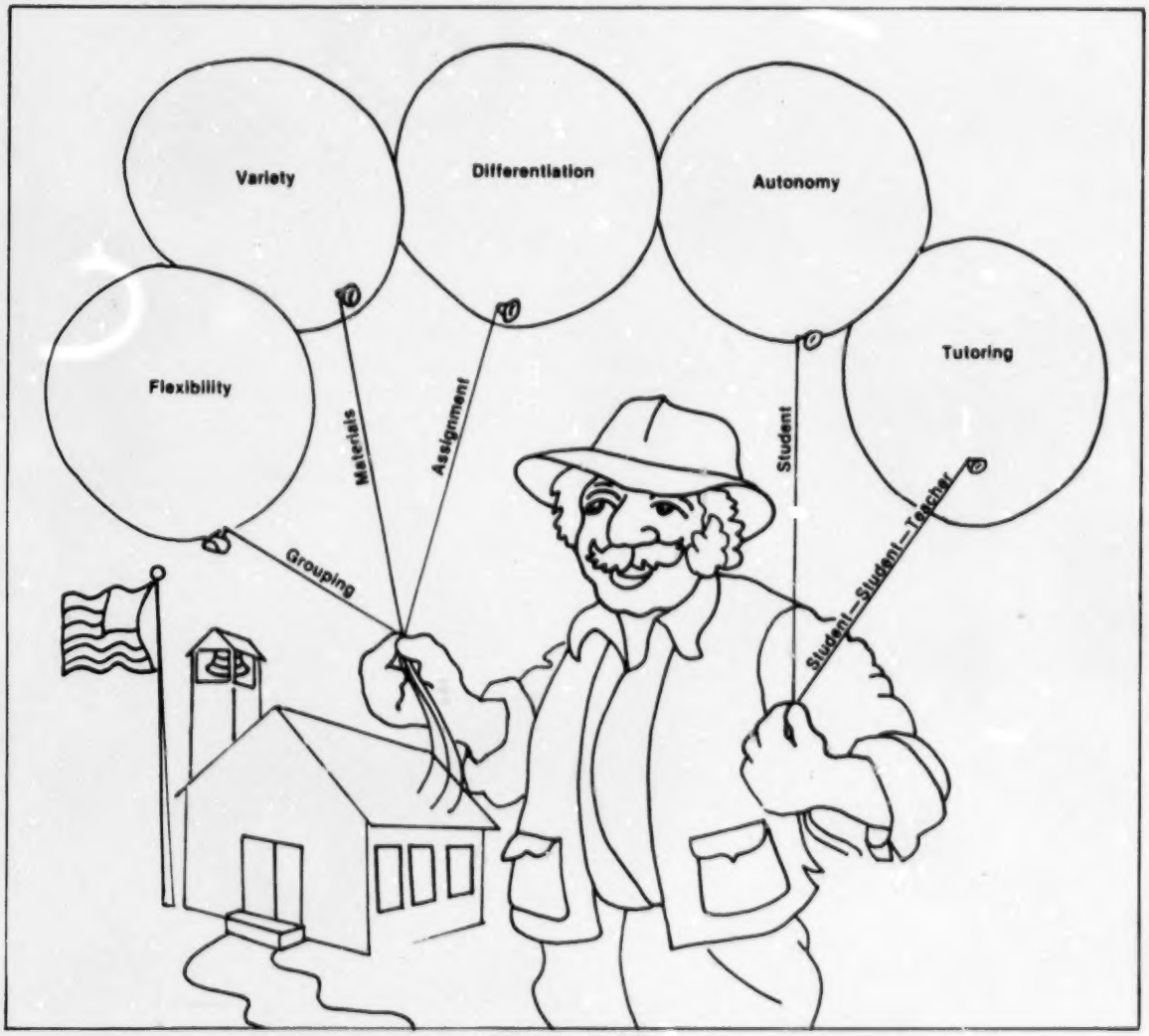
*Known widely as DSII, the network has been expanded to include a variety of educational programs. It is now called the Demonstration Programs for School Improvement, but since several programs are operating within the framework of the original concept, DSII is still a relevant descriptor in some contexts.

How Do Schools Get into the Network?

The process to determine whether a school is eligible for inclusion into the DSII network is carefully designed to permit the selection of only high quality programs of individualized instruction. The documentation includes a nomination report completed by the district superintendent or someone outside the school, a report from program officials and teachers detailing how the DSII standards are being met, and a report from a team of people who verify the program operation through on-site visits.

A validation review process is used for making final selections of demonstration schools. Public school administrators, university personnel, classroom teachers, education service center representatives, Texas Education Agency personnel, and other professionals in Texas constitute the review committee.



DSII Network Criteria for Participating Schools

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Has the Network Been Successful?

The network has been outstanding in encouraging innovative change, as evidenced by the many adaptations or adoptions of the programs. A recent study from a sampling of the past year's visitors indicated that a large percentage perceived their visits as being very productive, 76 percent having either already made or planned changes in their own endeavors as a result of the visits. When the network began full operation in January 1972, 35 schools and programs participated. The 1978-80 network includes programs operating in about 150 school.* During the first eight months of 1978-79, more than 1,500 visitors observed these demonstration sites. Over the past eight years, about 18,000 educators have visited DSII schools.

*A directory of all DSII programs, *Demonstration Schools in Individualized Instruction: 1978-80 Visitor's Guide,* is available free of charge by writing Publications Distribution, Texas Education Agency, 201 E. 11th St., Austin, Texas 78701.

Summary Of Practices In DSII Schools

The inservice education practices of DSII network schools were investigated in a recent study (Almanza, 1979). Data were gathered from 102 network elementary schools.* The inservice education (ISE) practices were investigated in these schools for the purpose of understanding better the place of in-service education in the process of developing programs that clearly involve innovative change.

Review of Schools Selected for Study

The network schools that were studied were widely distributed throughout Texas. Only four regional education service centers out of 20 did not have at least one school located within their boundaries. Many schools had more than one subject individualized, while nearly one third had all subjects included as individualized. When the program did not include all subjects, reading and mathematics were the primary subjects in schools having individualized programs.

The average campus enrollment of the schools included in the study was 496, with an average of 21 regular classroom teachers, six special teachers, and seven aides comprising the faculty. The average number of teachers reported as involved in the individualized program(s) in a school was 11, serving an average of 260 students. In 85 percent of the schools, the principal was identified as the person responsible for implementing curricular, instructional and/or organizational change within the building.

Summary of Innovative Practices

Objectives. All of the programs had an objectives-based curriculum. In a majority of them, school officials; i.e., teachers, supervisors, and principals, set the objectives. A few allowed the students to set their own objectives.

Materials. Student selection of materials as well as student freedom to move about while working was practiced by the programs in addition to some student scoring of their own work. In all of the programs students were allowed to work with a variety of materials developed for different levels of achievement. This was a unique feature in every program. The programs all provided opportunities to recycle with different materials and approaches in cases where a student's understanding was insufficient to proceed to new objectives.

Materials appeared to be used as an integral part of every program, with many types of materials available, including textbooks and library books; audiovisual equipment employed in ways that supported the concept of individualized instruction; and commercial and teacher-made exercises and games. The teacher-made materials included learning packets, "unipaks," minimodules, contracts, learning stations, learning prescriptions, and other modes that helped to individualize instruction. Instructional materials were easily accessible in all programs.

Involvement. A high degree of learner involvement was evidenced in all of the programs. High involvement appeared to be promoted by student choice of tasks and the opportunity to make suggestions about ways to acomplish the tasks. When students were randomly interviewed, they indicated a positive attitude toward school.

Pacing. Every program used individual or small group pacing. It was a striking or dominant feature in over half of the programs. Pacing can be described as allowing students to proceed at their rate and permitting time to complete a learning activity adjusted to the needs and interests of each student. The practice of pacing also included the opportunity for students to move ahead to the next level or to have experiences broadened when they demonstrated mastery of a task.

*Secondary schools are included in the DSII network but were eliminated from this study for methodological reasons.

Staffing. A wide variety of staffing patterns and teaching strategies in all of the schools was evident. All of the programs had curriculum specialists, consultants, and librarians available; three-fourths of the programs had parents, volunteers, or aides available to help.

Organization. Multigraded space and/or open area facilities were used in the majority of schools, even when the availability of labs and shops was limited.

Summary of Inservice Education Practices

The survey of inservice education practices revealed an abundance of rather striking patterns. An analysis of these phenomena suggested that training of high calibre was occurring.

Experiences. A wide array of experiences was reported. However, four of them predominated: workshops (doing, discussing, and demonstrating); consultations (individualized or small-group conferences on problems with specialist or supervisor); visits to other schools (carefully selected and prearranged); and grade-level meetings.

Incentives. Substantial use was made of released time to facilitate the inservice experiences. Inservice education was, of course, held on designated inservice days in these schools, but it was also conducted on other days. Although the items in the survey come under the headings of when, what type, and amount of released time, it was decided to consider these factors in light of incentives, since they have become so much matters of preference.

Voluntarism. There was a marked degree of freedom reported in the choice of inservice sessions by participants, even though participation was rarely perceived as being completely voluntary.

Expertise. A variety of human resources were used from inside and outside the district. Consultants from outside the district were usually from the regional education service center. Consultants from within the district were selected from local teachers and central office staff. College and university personnel were used less extensively.

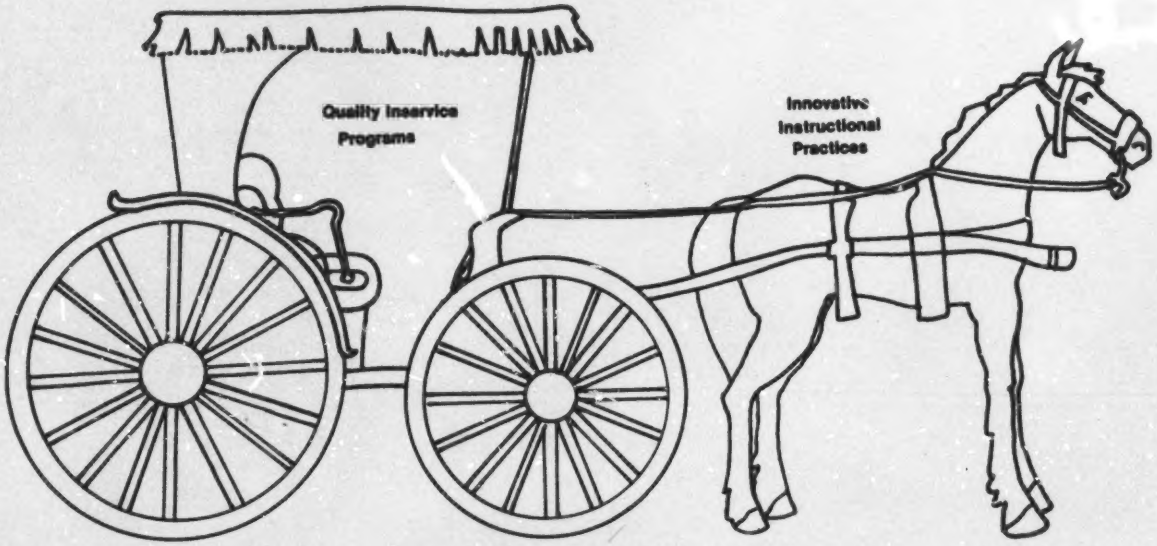
Planning. Planning activity for inservice education was reported to be extensive. Central office staff involvement was high; there was a tendency for more district-level planning than that at the campus level. Rarely, however, was planning strictly a building or district monopoly.

Funding. Funds were reported as being available at the building level for the majority of schools. This not only facilitated the use of released time for almost all of the respondents; it also provided for materials, transportation and consultants.

Content. A variety of content was reported in the programming, with curriculum subject matter being most extensively included. Focus on educational technology (use of tape recorders, projectors, and teaching machines) was rarely reported as comprising the content of the inservice experiences.

Objectives. The inservice activities, although frequently reported as being at the "awareness" level, tended to be highly task oriented. The training was deterined according to task and need.

The respondents generally believed that their innovative programs for individualizing instruction were the result of inservice activities. They also indicated that inservice education was necessary for continued implementation of their innovations. They did not, however, report an *increase* in inservice activities when the programs were initiated.



...Go Together Like a Horse and Carriage

Comparison of DSII Inservice with "Common Practices"

The summary of findings reported above did not include any comparisons between DSII schools and others that could have served as a control group. However, current "common practices" in Texas schools were identified in two unpublished doctoral dissertations covering the 1975-76 school year. These studies by Don P. Killough (1977) and Jimmie L. Creekmur (1977) do provide some bases for comparison.

Creekmur's study was based on a sample of 165 districts representing a cross section of the state. Killough studied each of the 20 regional education service centers. The findings from these two studies are abstracted and compared below with the inservice practices of the innovative DSII programs.

Comparison of Inservice Practices

Practice Descriptor	Common Practice	DSII Schools
Time spent in inservice education (ISE)	Minimum number of days	Well beyond the minimum
Scheduling	Regular, scheduled ISE days	Additional released time
Experience offered	Limited variety, mostly meetings	Wide variety, individualized
Content	Nearly half program-specific	Wide variety of content
Incentives	Attendance required	Voluntary choices, released time, travel oppotunities
Funding	Approximately $4.00 per student	Unknown
Planning	School principal dominated. Unsystematic, short-term planning.	Coordinated school, district planning
Consultants	Limited selection	Each school used from inside, outside district

Implications

A single study hardly justifies sweeping generalizations. There is still much to be learned about the effects of inservice education, the conditions that promote effectiveness, and the relationships between training and instructional change. However, the findings from this study are revealing and consistent with what one would have expected. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to suggest that successful efforts at implementing dramatic new instructional programs require inservice education of commensurate variety and quality.

Traditionally inservice education has been somewhat ritualistic, something to do in the name of "professionalism." Inservice education is now being increasingly promoted as a vehicle of accountability. A deficit model is employed with a focus on overcoming weaknesses and inadequacies. The results of this study suggest that the extent of successful change may be in proportion to the quality of inservice education that is provided.

If the findings generated by this research are valid, inservice education is an important ingredient in the operation of successfully-implemented innovative programs. Furthermore, the extensiveness, quality, and continuity of the inservice education associated with these DSII programs is such that an accidental relationship hardly seems possible.

How could one explain these findings? One explanation is that a tradition of extensive inservice education already existed in these districts, therefore providing a fertile field in which innovation could grow. Another explanation is that the innovators, in their efforts to be successful, utilized inservice experiences to facilitate program implementation. If one can accept either of these two explanations, then there exists a case for a casual link between inservice education and educational improvement.

Other explanations are worthy of consideration, too. One could hypothesize that the districts promoting innovative programs were also coincidentally promoting high quality inservice programs, with no necessary relationship between them. If such were the case, one wonders about the financial burdens attached to such developments, since both programs—innovative instruction and inservice education—are rather expensive by normal standards. More usual is the tendency to sacrifice inservice programming when other costs run high.

Still another explanation for high level innovations and high quality inservice education may be more promising. Either program might readily have stimulated an interest in, or need for, the other. Teachers getting involved in innovations may grow aware of their need for inservice education to gain newly required skills and competencies. Conversely, the stimulation of the inservice experiences of high quality may have led to decisions to innovate. In either case, casual linkages logically seem probable, but were not demonstrated in this study.

The problem of making innovations "work" is a matter of great concern in the field of education. Most new programs are not implemented successfully. They tend to be discontinued before they are fully installed, or diluted in process so as to render them meaningless. Sometimes the innovation can be shown to be unsuccessful in operation, not because of unsound design, but because of poor performance by teachers and other responsible personnel. Regardless of the reasons, it seems logical to expect inservice education to be a critical factor in contributing to the success of new programs. These findings suggest a further conclusion that extensive, high quality, continuing inservice education is an important factor bearing upon the effort to improve educational practices.

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(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

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Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

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